Fuels for Schools

Multifaceted Benefits Generated by Wildfire Risk Mitigation Project in Two Western Montana Communities

"We had all been so drastically affected by the fires…we had a personal desire to see something happen to make a difference in our community, that maybe it wouldn't be so dangerous…the concept of taking hazardous fuels and burning it at the school was very exciting because it was a solution." Becki Linderman, East Fork Resident & Darby School Grants Coordinator

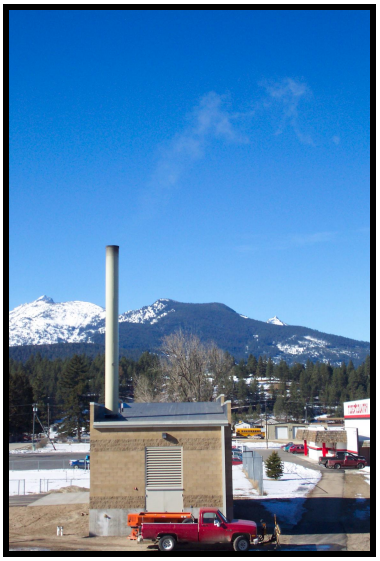
As two rural communities heavily impacted by the devastating Montana wildfires in 2000, Darby and Victor were especially motivated to reduce hazardous fuels in the surrounding interface. Offered the opportunity to pilot the use of a heating system that would consume wood slash generated, in part, by fuel treatment projects, these communities' school boards realized the multiple benefits the Fuels for Schools projects could offer.

In the first year of operation, Darby's new biomass boiler reduced the school's heating costs by $35,000 while consuming 640 tons of wood chips that otherwise could have been burned in slash piles.

Similar Fuels for Schools projects are being supported by R1-R4 State & Private Forestry in additional towns in Montana, as well as in North Dakota, Idaho and Nevada.

Benefits to forested landscapes and communities.

- Savings of 50% on rural schools' heating costs.
- Reduce dependency on nonrenewable fossil fuels.
- Local employment hauling generating and hauling chips to the schools.
- Improved air quality created by burning slash in efficient boiler rather than in slash piles in the woods.
- Expanded natural resource curriculum and hands-on science lab monitoring for schools' students.
- Improved forest health and reduced fire danger
- Expanded treatment options for forest managers and landowners.



For more information contact:
Nan Christianson (406) 363-7113
State & Private Forestry R1/R4 and Bitterroot N. F.
Economic Action Programs
nchristianson@fs.fed.us

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